

INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION REPORT

International Application No. PCT/DE 03/00628

I. Basis of the report

1. This report has been drawn up on the basis of (Substitute sheets which have been furnished to the receiving Office in response to an invitation under Article 14 are referred to in this report as "originally filed" and are not annexed to the report since they do not contain amendments (Rules 70.16 and 70.17)):

The description,
pages 1 - 7

as originally filed

The claims,
Nos. 1-6,

filed on 07/24/2004
with the letter
of 07/20/2004

The drawings,
sheets/Fig. 1/2-2/2

as originally filed

V. Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement

1. STATEMENT

Novelty (N)	Claims 1-6	YES
	Claims	NO
Inventive Step (IS)	Claims 1-6	YES
	Claims	NO
Industrial Applicability (IA)	Claims 1-6	YES
	Claims	No

2. CITATIONS AND EXPLANATIONS
see appended sheet

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SUPPLEMENTARY PAGE
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Related Art: The document WO99/10803 A1 discloses a method for environment sensing in a vehicle, where environment sensors are used to detect a distance of the vehicle to objects on the roadside. A critical distance is determined, and when the actual distance is less than the critical distance, protective measures are initiated.

Object: To better adapt the method to the driving situation.

Achievement of the Object: The critical distance is modified as a function of the host vehicle velocity, allowing the danger potential to be estimated.

The object of independent Claim 1 is novel, has inventive merit, and is industrially applicable.

Claims 2 - 6, which are dependent on Claim 1, are both novel and inventive. They also satisfy the criterion of industrial applicability.

Revised Claims 1 through 6

1. A method for preventive protection of vehicle occupants in dangerous situations, the distance (a) of the vehicle (1) to objects (2) on the roadside being determined on an ongoing basis according to size, it being determined whether this distance (a) is less than a critical distance (a_{crit}), and protective measures being initiated when such a determination is made,

wherein the host vehicle velocity (V_{host}) is determined by magnitude and the critical distance (a_{crit}) is determined as a function of the determined host vehicle velocity (V_{host}).

2. The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein, if it is determined that the actual distance is less than a first critical distance, protective measures of a first kind are initiated, and if it is determined that the actual distance is less than a second critical value, which is less than the first critical value, protective measures of a second kind are initiated.

3. The method as recited in Claim 2, wherein the protective measure of the first kind is an audible and/or visible signaling to the vehicle's driver.

4. The method as recited in Claim 2 or Claim 3, wherein the protective measures of the second type is activation of reversible restraining means (11) and/or preparation of irreversible restraining means (10).

5. The method as recited in one of Claims 1 through 4, wherein, if the determined distance (a) again exceeds the critical distance (a_{crit}), the initiated protective measures are canceled again.

6. The method as recited in Claim 1, wherein the function is determined in such a way that below a predefined host vehicle velocity (V_{min}), the critical distance (a_{crit}) is zero, and above a predefined distance (a_{max}), the critical distance (a_{crit}) is independent of the host vehicle velocity, and between the two pairs of values, the relationship between the host vehicle velocity (V_{host}) and the critical distance (a_{crit}) runs in an essentially linear fashion, i.e. according to a predefined function.